

LOS ANGELES COUNTY VETERANS ADVISORY COMMISSION

1816 S. FIGUEROA STREET
LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA 90015



Ruth A. Wong
Director

MINUTES REGULAR MEETING Wednesday, July 14, 2021

Present:

Commissioners

Tom Lasser
Joe Leal
Patricia Jackson-Kelley
Jawana McFadden
Anthony Allman
Jennifer Campbell

Absent:

Commissioners

Brittanie Moore

County Department

Military and Veterans Affairs

Ruth Wong, Director
Stephanie Guerrero, Secretary

Call to Order and Pledge of Allegiance

Acting Chair Tom Lasser called the meeting to order at 1:30 p.m. The Pledge of Allegiance was led by Commissioner Jennifer Campbell, 3rd District.

Roll Call

There was a total of 5 Commissioners at the time of roll call; no quorum present. Shortly after, Commissioner Jawana McFadden joined the meeting; QUORUM PRESENT.

Approval of Minutes

Motion made by Commissioner Anthony Allman to accept the Minutes for June 09, 2021 and seconded by Commissioner Jawana McFadden. With no objections, motion passed.

Chairman's Report

Acting Chair Tom Lasser stated that the in-person retreat will be postponed to later in the year so that all Commissioners can get acquainted with one another. There are two pending Commissioners; former Commissioner Marcel Rodarte for the 4th District and John Gutierrez for the 5th District. There remains one vacancy for the 5th District. Still looking to fill the Chair and Vice Chair roles for the Commission. The Commissioners will be reviewing and completing the Strategic Plan FY 2021-22 in-person at the retreat.

Public Comments

Chaplain Dov Cohen, Kevin Dobson FoodToLife.org program, is proud of his team that have reached a milestone of 400,000 meals delivered. Janice Bowman, USS Battleship Iowa, has offered one galley for the FoodToLife.org program to prepare meals aboard the USS Battleship Iowa. Chaplain Dov is considering whether to accept that offer and will know at the next meeting.

Latia Suttle advocates for veterans facing multiple issues in Family Court, Children's Court, and DCFS. She inquired about the status of veterans being properly identified in Family Court, Children's Court, and DCFS. She stated that she received a message in May that MVAs legal counsel was looking into it. Ms. Suttle asked, "when can veterans begin to receive assistance in these specifics courts and will there be a timeline of when these issues will be properly addressed?"

Acting Chair Tom Lasser stated that it is still a work in progress and thanked her for patiently waiting on an update.

Guest Speaker(s)

Lauren Duncan, Executive Director, Healing California was introduced by Director Ruth Wong. Lauren stated that Healing California is a 501c3 statewide program that offers medical, dental, and vision benefits at no cost to underserved populations with a special focus on veterans and families. There is a mobile medical unit that travel throughout the state in areas where there are no doctors for 50-100 miles. The services provided at the clinics include teeth cleaning, extractions, and cavity fillings, as well as eye glasses being made on the spot. No one is denied service due to DD214 status and income. The program is 100 percent donor supported. Ms. Duncan invited the Commission to a clinic field trip for them to see the compassionate care that is offered to the clients. She suggested that Patriotic Hall would be a great place to set up a clinic in the parking lot. She asked for the Commission's help to spread the word and encouraged them to check out their website for clinics.

Acting Chair Tom Lasser asked, "where is Healing California located?" Ms. Duncan stated that it is stationed in La Habra.

Sander Schmidt, Analyst, Los Angeles County Development Authority (LACDA) was introduced by Commissioner Anthony Allman. This is a follow-up to the conversation to last month's principle developers plan of the housing project at the West Los Angeles VA. That project is a group effort of Federal, State, County, and City, who are working together to address homelessness in the veteran community. LACDA is the agency responsible for allocating vouchers to make the VA a home for veterans. As of May 1, 2021, 500 vouchers were allocated by HUD and now up to 3,200 vouchers for the program. By default, they are Tenant-Based vouchers.

There are two-types of vouchers with major differences:

1. Tenant-Based Vouchers: assistance is tied to the tenant; when the tenant vacates the unit, the assistance is terminated with no vacancy payments. Tenants may pay up to 40 percent of income on a 12-month lease which is between the tenant and the owner. LACDA has an agreement with the City of Los Angeles and veterans may use their VASH voucher within Los Angeles.

2. Project-Based Vouchers: assistance is tied to the unit; when the tenant vacates the unit, LACDA will obtain another referral from the VA to occupy the unit as quickly as possible and up to two months of vacancy payments. Tenant may pay no more than 30 percent of income. There is a 20-year contract between LACDA and owner. PBVASH vouchers may only be issued to projects within LACDAs jurisdiction. ;

The tenants deemed eligible are given a Tenant-Based voucher and are told to come back when they find a unit in the open market. A deterrent is that owners do not want to rent to Section 8. The voucher is only valid for 180 days, however, there has been an increase in tenants asking for an extension because they cannot find a unit within that timeframe.

The Project-Based vouchers are desirable for developers because it provides security for their finances and they have the option to extend the contract for another 20 years. This is where the Project-Based vouchers provide a solution as development are built with these tenants in mind so that those barriers do not exist. In addition, there are 343 PBVASH commitments with other current/future projects that are operational across LA County in each Supervisorial District; areas such as Los Angeles, El Monte, Bell, South Gate, Inglewood, Norwalk, Lancaster, and Palmdale.

Department of Military and Veterans Affairs Report

Ruth Wong, Director, provided the following updates:

- County Commissions memo from Board Executive Office – The BOS plan to reopen County buildings in September which includes in-person Commission meetings.
- CVSO funding via State budget process – approved \$5.4 million ongoing totaling \$11 million annually; huge victory for California counties.
- Information Technology Investment Board – MVA Website Redesign project approved for \$100K.
- Veterans Day LA – 20th Anniversary of 9/11 and New Faces of Freedom documentary of 9/11 veterans with panel discussion in November.
- Women's Program – MVA partnership with Wolf Connection in Palmdale, 8-week program to help women veterans with trauma related conditions.

Agenda Items that are Deferred to Next Month's Meeting

- Strategic Plan 2021-2022 will continue to be reviewed – Tom Lasser
- Update in-person meetings – Tom Lasser
- Mayor of LA announcement of Los Angeles Veterans Technical Training Academy (LAVTTA) – Jawana McFadden
- MVA Budget of what programs are being funded – Anthony Allman

Good of the Order

Commissioner Jawana McFadden stated that the Mayor of LA is expected to make an announcement of the Los Angeles Veterans Technical Training Academy (LAVTTA). The technical training academy is the biggest partnership in supporting and leveraging TikTok and other corporations. Working to get as many people engaged to build that mentorship and pathway for recently transitioning veterans.

In addition to Commissioner McFadden, Commissioner Jennifer Campbell added that the Mayor of LA and his veteran advisory council will be meeting for the announcement at City Hall on July 27th. Actual courses begin in August. Will share more information as it becomes available.

Commissioner Joe Leal stated that he is heavily involved in VPAN. He gave kudos to Director Ruth Wong because DMVA is changing the lives of veterans and families. Mr. Leal asked, "if possible, can George Dixon talk about Veterans Service claims?" He expressed his gratitude for DMVA and VPAN. He also stated that many senior citizen veterans who are in their 70's and 80's are seeking employment, and unfortunately are not getting hired due to their age. Last, many military officers who experience mental illness do not seek help because they believe it will affect their military service; it's time to change the stigma and connect them to the Vet Centers in different areas. Hard at work and will continue to provide quality service.

Commissioner Anthony Allman stated that he added the LA article in chat box. He noticed that the meeting notice was sent out through GovDelivery email distribution network. Mr. Allman would like to work on getting the meeting recordings on YouTube so that people can share information throughout their different networks.

Acting Chair Tom Lasser stated that he spent time with Supervisor Janice Hahn at the Korean Bell of Friendship in San Pedro on July 4th. This past Sunday, he was honored to be on the program with Pink Lady and Chaplain Dov at the studio in Woodland Hills. Pink Lady has a wide variety on her program, and highlights veterans periodically. On July 28th, Commissioner Lasser attended the ceremony of the groundbreaking of the arrival of two offshore patrol cutters assigned in San Pedro. All military bases are in the 4th District. LA Air Force Base is now a Space Force Installation.

Adjournment

In memory of Pete Ramirez, U.S. Army, WW II veteran and Frank Wada Sr., U.S. Army.

A total of 28 participants in attendance. Meeting adjourned at 2:33 p.m.

Stephanie Guerrero
Secretary
July 14, 2021